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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2075
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0165
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0175
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0648
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0464
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0172
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0331
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0550
RUEHVN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2470
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1857
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000405

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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ DEMONSTRATION CONTINUES; PARLIAMENT TO
CONSIDER DRAFT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

REF: A. BISHKEK 397
[1B.](#) BISHKEK 396

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[11.](#) (SBU) SUMMARY: Following a quiet night at Bishkek's central Ala-Too Square, the opposition United Front and For Reforms movements continued their "non-stop" protest on April 12, with the rally program beginning somewhat after the advertised start time of 16:00 local. Speaker of Parliament Sultanov announced that parliament would convene and vote April 16 to fill one of the vacancies on the constitutional court, giving the court a quorum. Sultanov said that the parliament would consider in committee the draft constitution prepared by Prime Minister Atambayev's working group, and he suggested that parliament would discuss the opposition's competing draft constitution if the opposition presented it formally in accordance with the parliament's rules. As of 17:00, the situation was quiet, and the crowd on the square was approximately 2500, with 200-300 police a few blocks away relaxing in the shade of trees in a nearby park. END
SUMMARY.

QUIET EVENING

[12.](#) (SBU) Following political speeches in the afternoon (Ref A), local pop stars entertained the crowd from the stage on the evening of April 11. The crowd, which had peaked earlier at 4-5,000, dwindled rapidly after the distribution of food, and we estimate that fewer than 1000 demonstrators camped out overnight in the 30 yurts and dozens of tents on the square. Most of the 200-300 police, who had remained during the day in a nearby park area, also left the area after 20:30 local.

The square remained quiet and peaceful overnight.

SECOND DAY JUST GETTING STARTED

¶3. (SBU) The program for the second day of the "non-stop" anti-government protest was scheduled to begin at 16:00 local on April 12. As of 17:00, the crowd was approximately 2500, and several opposition MPs were on the stage, preparing to begin speeches. The evening's program will also reportedly include a patriotic song contest, with a cash prize for the winner. The first speakers announced that a much larger rally would be held beginning at 17:00 the next day, Friday, April 13.

DEVELOPMENTS IN PARLIAMENT

¶4. (SBU) Following a meeting of several parliamentarians in the morning of April 12, Speaker of Parliament Marat Sultanov announced that the parliament would reconvene April 16 to vote to fill one of the long-standing vacancies on the constitutional court, thereby allowing the court to conduct business. Under Kyrgyz law, the constitutional court is required to rule on constitutional amendments to the constitution. The lack of a quorum on the court created serious procedural "obstacles" during the adoption of the November and December 2006 versions of the constitution -- and led to many questioning the legitimacy of those versions of the constitution.

¶5. (SBU) The Speaker also announced that he had already forwarded to the constitutional court the draft constitution prepared by Prime Minister Atambayev's working group and sent to the parliament by President Bakiyev April 10. The

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parliament's committee on constitutional law will also review the working group's draft starting April 13. Sultanov suggested that the parliament would discuss the opposition's draft constitution if the opposition presented it formally in accordance with the parliament's procedural rules.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) Turnout on the first day of the demonstration was clearly a disappointment to the opposition. United Front leader Felix Kulov had boasted that 50,000 demonstrators would turn out, but by our estimates the crowd never grew above 5000 on the first day (press, police, and organizers gave varying estimates, from 4923 to over 30,000; we're reasonably confident in our estimate). Government officials have made disparaging comments about the crowd, with State Secretary Madumarov saying that the demonstrators would be on

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the square only as long as the organizers could pay them, and GKNB Chair Sutalinov saying that the protestors came only for the money and a "shot of vodka." Bishkek authorities have prohibited alcohol sales in the downtown area, and the Interior Ministry has ordered that all stores selling weapons and ammunition be closed. While there remain serious concerns about the security situation, to this point, everything has been peaceful. And while there have been no public negotiations between the president and the opposition leaders, there does appear to be some movement on the opposition's demands for constitutional reform.
YOVANOVITCH